

WHIRLPOOL OF DEATH

TITUSVILLE AND OIL CITY DEVASTATED

By Water, Burning Oil and Fearful Gases.

CLOUD-BURST AT HEAD OF OIL CREEK.

Hundreds Perish, and Many Hundreds More Missing.

Oil City, Pa., June 6.—The most appalling disaster in the history of this unfortunate city fell upon it Sunday like a thunderbolt, resulting in the destruction of life and property, which, as yet, can only be approximated, so great and widespread has been the ruin.

At 11:30 o'clock Sunday morning a large proportion of the population was enjoying the beautiful Sunday morning along the banks and bridges of the Allegheny river and Oil Creek, which empties into that stream. The cause of this unusual outpouring of the population was a curiosity to see the rapid rise in both the creek and the river.

Word had reached here early in the morning that a heavy cloud-burst had occurred at Spartansburg, above Titusville, and that a great flood, sweeping down upon that city, had drowned many. But few details had been heard here at the time mentioned—11:30—yet hundreds lined the banks of the two streams, just where the two streams joined.

Suddenly the older heads in the crowds noticed a thin covering of oil floating on the surface of the water, while at the same time an ominous wave of gas, arising from the crude, refined and distilled benzene floating down, swept up from the flood, and began to permeate the whole valley.

"Stand back, stand back!" shouted a commanding voice, and the people slowly and unwillingly began to retreat from bridge and bank. They were very slow—too slow—for the volume of oil began swelling and rolling, while waves of the subtle gas began coming, almost strangling those near by.

Just then a man on horseback pushed his way through the crowd, waving his hands and repeating in a voice of thunder, "Stand back." It was known that the refineries lining the banks for miles had been wrecked, and with a presentiment of evil, with one accord there was a dash for safety.

Presently, far up the stream came one dull, sullen report, and immediately after two more. Instantly the great crowds realized that the oil had taken fire, but they were eternally gaining this knowledge, as compared to the lightning speed of the What followed is indelibly imprinted upon the minds of every panic-stricken spectator, but no human tongue can picture the transcending horror of the scene.

At the upper end of the city, a tiny tongue of flame rushed from a house fire on the banks and shot across the creek like a streak of lightning. A dull, booming explosion followed, and immediately the flame flew up and down the creek. The surcharged air was cleared of gas in an instant, only to be filled with an element far more fatal and horrifying.

It seemed as if the very heavens had burst into flame after the first explosion, which then became a solid mass of flame along creek and river for two miles up and down—a fire that rolled and beat against bank and buildings and towered high up until the very hills were lost to sight in the hell of flame.

Oil City is hemmed in on all sides by steep hills, and it seemed as if none could escape the furious element, which began catching up buildings along the creek like so many toys of straw. Thousands poured out of their homes at the sound of the first explosion, and had hardly gained the street when the second and third reports were heard.

The entire valley was like one vast gas reservoir. People were hurled about and thrown down or tossed from side to side by the force of the explosions. Windows crashed and buildings swayed as if upheaved by an earthquake while more terrifying than all was the midnight darkness that covered the city like a funeral pall.

This intense blackness lasted but a few seconds, when it was replaced by a glaring light and the heat of the burning gas and oil, when again a lowering cloud settled over the valley from the black waves of smoke. These terrifying transitions from light to darkness and intense heat occurred in scarcely a moment of time, but it seemed an eternity to the people, who believed that their last day had come. Thousands prostrated themselves or were hurled to the ground, while thousands struggled bravely against the elements towards home and kindred, that they might die together.

The next instant they were prostrated by a second explosion, only to rise to their feet again and face what all considered their doom. Huge waves of flame leaped from the river banks and began licking up one house after another. The flames began leaping from one roof to another, then from scores to hundreds, until within three minutes almost the entire portion of the Third ward was in flames.

Fully 3,000 people lived in that ward, or were lining the banks of the river and creek at the time, and after the first dull stupor, a scene of madness followed. Men forgot who and what they were and fought down the weaker like demons in their mad rush for safety. Women and children were swept to the ground and trampled under foot by hordes of men.

"To the hills, to the hills!" was the cry. The insane wave of shrieking humanity started up Center street, leaving the moaning, mangled forms of many of the weaker who were they had been trampled in the dirt. Behind them came the flames in great waves, that overtook many faltering footsteps, while the blistering heat grew fiercer every moment with the added fuel of hundreds of houses.

Then behind this maddened crowd came a few brave men, who tenderly picked up those trampled, under foot, or assisted sick and helpless to higher ground, once that was reached in safety, came anxiety for friends and relatives who had been along the river banks watching the flood when the mass of fire and smoke fell upon the city.

ardson, machinist, and four children, burned; James Burns, laborer, missing; Frank Watson, 14 years old, burned; Frank Hasenfratz, 18 years old, burned; J. L. Dorworth, prominent lawyer, burned; J. H. Dougherty, oil man of large property, burned; George Hawkins, burned; William White, foreman of Continental refinery, burned; William Terwilliger and brother John, burned; wife of unknown Pole six children who have not been identified; Ed Mills and four children, drowned; Mrs. John Kohn, burned; Charles Fisher, burned; Mr. and Mrs. Copeland and baby, six days old, burned; Mrs. Levi Fetters, missing; Miss Emma Briggs, missing; John Ulander, Sr., missing; John Gillespie, burned. The list of the dead and missing at this hour is 88, but conservative estimates of many prominent citizens place the number at 100 or more. There are, undoubtedly, numbers of bodies buried under the ruins in the burned district, and many bodies have floated down the Allegheny river. It is very probable that some bodies will never be recovered, and many that have are so burned and charred as to be beyond recognition.

THE INJURED. The names of the injured, so far as ascertained, follow: Eugene Fritz, badly burned; Samuel Streek, badly burned; Mrs. George Hawkins and daughter, burned; probably a fatality; Nat Simon, laborer, badly cut and burned; wife and child, another of Sam Briggs, seriously burned. Many others whose names are not known are injured.

THE TITUSVILLE HORROR.

Nearly Half a Hundred Dead and Several Hundreds Unaccounted For.

TITUSVILLE, Pa., June 6.—Titusville was visited on Sunday by one of the most appalling fires and overwhelming floods in the history of this country. A conservative estimate places the number of lives lost at fully 45 from fire and drowning.

The list now actually found, and known to be dead is as follows: William Cuyper, Fred Reide, Mr. Mary Hahn, Mamie Hahn, Gertrude Hahn, Clara Hahn, Peter Hahn, Mrs. Fred Campbell and two children, Oliver Edgar, Joseph Spiegel and two children visiting here from Warren, Frank Quinn, wife and child, Ed. Conner, Mrs. Quinn, Mrs. Purman and daughter (colored), Mrs. A. Jacobs, Della Rice, Mrs. English and child, Mrs. Jacobs and child, a picture-frame peddler name unknown, Goldie Hohn 11 years old, Mrs. Jacob Ringenheimer and seven children, Mrs. C. P. Casperson, Mrs. J. Quinlan, Mrs. M. Quinn, John McEldred. As near as can be gathered from the reports as they came in the loss by destruction of property will aggregate fully \$1,500,000. All this loss is in this city, with the surrounding country yet to be heard from.

A large number of the most extensive and prosperous manufacturing establishments now lay in ashes, and hundreds of homes and business places are utterly wiped out, while the streets are filled with a hungry, homeless, weeping and distracted people, mourning the loss of loved ones who have perished in the vast sea of water and fire. As near as can be gathered from the reports as they came in the loss by destruction of property will aggregate fully \$1,500,000. All this loss is in this city, with the surrounding country yet to be heard from.

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The scenes of the day completely beggar description. Parents and children stood by, without power to aid, and witnessed each other struggle in the clutches of the flood until eventually they went down to rise no more. As sad and thrilling scenes as ever took place in the valley of the Conemaugh three years ago have been repeated here to the thousands of people looked on without the least chance of averting them. People do not yet realize the enormity of the great catastrophe that has befallen them. It is too full of horror for them to grasp in a moment. Fully 200 people are as yet unaccounted for but in the crush, hurry and confusion it is impossible to give actual figures.

Five men were seen to perish together. The sight was witnessed by fully 2,000 people, all powerless to render aid. The men held a piece of timber and were struggling to make the shore. Just as it looked as though they would reach it a neighboring billow of oil exploded, and the burning oil quickly enveloped the doomed men, death came almost instantly. Scores of cases of a like fearful nature are reported.

About midnight Saturday historical old Oil Creek burst suddenly to rise. Heavy and almost incessant rains have been prevalent throughout this entire section for the past six weeks. This, however, does not seem to have been the cause of the sudden rise in the water, although at first it was thought to be the case. Late reports say that the mill dam, owned by Thomson & Eldred, and located at the little town of Spartansburg, seven miles above this city, suddenly burst. This body of artificial water was one and one-half miles in length and one-fourth of a mile wide, and quite deep. That great body of water, this suddenly let loose, made of this valley in the course of a few moments, a regular inland sea. The avalanche of water descending when most of the inhabitants were sleeping, completely and at once shut them off from the higher portions of the city. Notwithstanding this state of affairs, the danger of the city was not underrated, no one having the slightest idea that the flood, dangerous as it was, was to be so soon augmented by fire. This, however, was true, for at 2 o'clock Sunday morning, immediately following three terrific explosions along the creek, the city was engulfed in a great fire, which spread in the direction of the Crescent refinery, located on the north side of the creek in the East End, and owned by John Schwartz & Co.

A second look showed the entire plant to be one vast sheet of solid flame, the light from which illuminated the full half mile of surrounding blackness and showed to the assembled and horrified spectators the full extent of the great calamity that had befallen their city. The tongues of flame shooting 200 feet and more straight into the air, the shrieks and agonizing cries of the helpless humans being caged in their dwellings like rats in a trap, in the middle of that rushing and mighty water and within the very shadow of death from burning oil, benzene and naphtha that threatened at any time to engulf them.

Oil City, now swollen to 500 acres its natural size and reaching from one hillside to the other, presented an appalling picture. Floating swiftly by on its bosom were all sorts of manners and kinds of animate and inanimate objects—tanks, stills with the steam being blown off, houses, barns, horses, cows, chickens, everything almost being borne onward with a rush. Clinging to various objects such as driftwood, pieces of boards, timbers and any other object they could lay hands on, were scores of human beings, their white and terror-stricken countenances, desperate struggles and plaintive, soul-piercing cries all combining to create impressions in the minds of the beholders never to be effaced or forgotten.

About one hour from the time the Crescent works caught another alarm was sounded, and it was found that oil discharged from an overturned tank further up the creek had scattered itself over a broad expanse of water to reach the Crescent fire, where it at once ignited, and in a moment a large acreage of the creek was one vast sea of fire. This blaze soon spread to the international Oil Works owned by J. Thomas & Co., and they were soon in a blaze. Then came the large refining plant and soap factory of Rice & Robinson, which the flames in a short time reached and consumed. The wind was in the right quarter and on sped the fire, arriving in due time at the Oil Creek refinery and was plant.

The fire destroyed the large furniture factory, store and store room of Casperson & Rowe, located on South Franklin street; the Dullen Hotel, opposite the Western New York and Pennsylvania passenger depot; the Western New York and Pennsylvania freight depot and about 75 private dwellings. Figuring the loss at Wood's plant, the total loss in this city will probably approach close to \$1,500,000. It is partly covered by insurance.

The loss in the country by washouts and loss of bridges will be enormous. There is not a county or township bridge for many miles that is not washed away, and the roads in every direction are nearly impassable. The Western New York and Pennsylvania and the Union and Titusville roads have not attempted to run trains and will be obliged to send an enormous amount of money before traffic can be run in any direction.

FIFTY-SECOND CONGRESS.

Tuesday—Nothing of importance was accomplished in the Senate and after routine business the Senate adjourned. The House started out with good intentions this morning to do something with the Postoffice Appropriation bill, but struck a snag in the clause providing for free delivery. Mr. Caldwell (Ohio) moved to increase the appropriation from \$10,450,000 to \$10,745,000, and when a vote was taken he made the point of no quorum. A call of the House ensued, a resolution was passed revoking leaves of absence, except for sickness and the House adjourned until to-morrow when it is expected to resume its session.

Wednesday—In the Senate general Eppa Hunton, appointed Senator from Virginia, to succeed the late Senator Harbur, was sworn in. The free silver coinage bill was then taken up and debated until adjournment. Another day was devoted by the House to the discussion of the free postal delivery system, and no progress was made with the Postoffice Appropriation bill, except the adoption of an amendment providing that no part of the \$10,745,000 appropriated for free delivery should be disbursed until an establishment additional free delivery offices in any Congressional district where there may be one or more free delivery offices already in operation. The necessary qualifications shall have been supplied with at least one free delivery office. Representative Hall, of Minnesota, introduced in the House a bill placing coal bituminous and shale upon the free list. Almost the whole day was consumed in discussion of points of order, and the business of any importance was transacted.

Thursday—In the Senate the resolution offered yesterday by Mr. Turpie, calling for the correspondence with Haiti, Colombia and Venezuela in regard to reciprocity, was taken up and Mr. Turpie's motion, that the Senate upon it. At the close of Mr. Turpie's speech the resolution was adopted. At 2 o'clock the bill to provide for the free coinage of gold and silver was laid before the Senate, and Mr. Stewart, of Ohio, his argument in support of it. At the close of Mr. Stewart's speech the silver bill went over without action. The resolution reported from the Finance Committee for a committee of five Senators to inquire whether the law relative to the deposit of funds in banks, and to investigate recent failures of National banks, and any other violation of law or irregularities was agreed to. The Senate then proceeded to executive business, and at 4 o'clock adjourned till Monday next.

LATE TELEGRAPHIC TICKS

FROM MANY POINTS.

Important News Items Received as We Go to Press.

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Emma Blum, at Muscatine, Ill., suffered blood poisoning after being pecked by a hen and came near dying.

Two earthquake shocks, just heavy enough to stop clocks, were felt in California.

The Mississippi floods have wiped several villages off the face of the earth.

A Red Wing, Minn., three young men were drowned in the river there. They are Gustaf Hakren, Swan Soderlund and John A. Benson. In company with Sam Johnson they went out in a small boat. The cable ferry was crossing and in attempting to cross over the cable the boat was upset. Johnson clung to the upturned boat and was saved, but the others all drowned.

A most disastrous wreck occurred on the Deadwood Central Railway near Deadwood, S. D., which resulted in the killing of James Scott and the probable fatal injury of William Thomas. The accident was occasioned by a frosty track, which caused the train to slide.

The heaviest rainfall in years visited Nevada, Mo., Monday night. The river and creeks were swollen out of their banks. Two men were killed by lightning.

A cyclone swept through Hetchville, Tex., wiping out 20 houses. Several people were killed and many were injured. The property loss is upwards of \$30,000.

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Capital, Labor and Industrial. Miners of the Pennsylvania Schuylkill coal regions are jubilant over an increase of 1 percent in the rate of wages. This is due to the advance in the market price of coal, and a further increase is expected in the near future.

The big strike on Langhead, Modette & Company Uniontown, Pa., is ended, notwithstanding the way anticipated by the Trades council. The strikers of all the unions except the carpenters went back to work, and the company secured carpenters to take the place of the strikers. There were 200 men out, 30 of whom were carpenters. This action dissolves the Trades Council, where the trouble originated, and workmen and contractors are alike happy. No further trouble is anticipated.

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legal holiday for the first time in Florida and Mississippi Friday.			
Mortuary.			
General Ralph Buckland died at Fremont, Ohio. He was born in 1812, and was conspicuous in the late civil war.			
General Turner C. Moorehead, a veteran of the Mexican and Civil wars, died at Asbury Park, N. J., aged 80.			
General R. D. Mussey died in Washington, after a brief illness. He participated in the Civil War throughout and before the war was Adjutant General of the State of Ohio.			
Financial and Commercial.			
The Bank of Pueblo (Col.) assigned. The cause is due to extreme dull times and inability to make collections on overdue accounts.			
Personal.			
Secretary's Foster's wife and daughter, Secretary's Rusk's daughter and Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford sailed for Europe on the City of Paris on Thursday.			
Legislative.			